Security Council

Sixtieth year

Provisional

5108th meeting

Monday, 10 January 2005, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Mayoral	(Argentina)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mrs. Patterson

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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05-20296 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Expression of condolences and minute of silence for the victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like, on behalf of the Security Council, to express profound sympathy and condolences to the Governments and peoples affected by a powerful earthquake which struck the west coast of northern Sumatra, Indonesia, on 26 December, triggering a catastrophic tsunami that moved through neighbouring parts of the Indian Ocean. Over 150,000 people, including tourists from a wide range of countries, lost their lives, and many more were injured and made homeless.

I request members to stand and observe a minute of silence in memory of those who so tragically lost their lives in that unprecedented disaster.

The members of the Council observed a minute of silence.

Expression of welcome to the new members of the Security Council and of thanks to the outgoing members

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first meeting of the Security Council this year, I should like to extend very warm wishes for a fruitful new year to all members of the Security Council, the United Nations and the Secretariat.

Argentina began its term of office as an elected member of the Security Council on 1 January 2005. During the first month of our membership we have assumed the presidency of this important organ of the United Nations. We promise to carry out this singular responsibility with a renewed commitment to the indispensable work of the United Nations and the ideals of the Charter.

At the same time, in presiding over this first meeting of the Council of 2005, I am happy to welcome the other new members: Denmark, Greece, Japan and the United Republic of Tanzania. We all look forward with confidence to their participation in the work of the Council. Their experience and wisdom will be of invaluable assistance in the discharge of the Council's enormous responsibilities.

I should also like to take this opportunity to express the Council's deep gratitude to the outgoing members — Angola, Chile, Germany, Pakistan and Spain — for their important contributions to the business of the Council.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to pay a sincere tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Abdallah Baali, Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Council during the month of December 2004. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Baali for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Arnault to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security

Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Arnault: I would like to thank you, Sir, for having given me this opportunity to brief the Council at this early date on developments in Afghanistan and on our plans for the coming months. It is very gratifying that the Council has made Afghanistan one of its very first subjects for discussion on this year's agenda. The presidential election on 9 October 2004 and the recent appointment of the Cabinet have brought with them new momentum in the Afghan peace process. It is very important for the Afghans and for us in the international community to take full advantage of this circumstance, to move the Bonn agenda forcefully forward and to fulfil, as much as possible, this year, the broad objectives of the transition.

As the Council is aware, on 7 December 2004 President Karzai was sworn in, together with his two vice-presidents. Before and after his inauguration, the President held protracted consultations regarding the formation of his Cabinet. That was a complex exercise involving, on the one hand, the need to increase the number of qualified professionals to lead the ministries — a requirement implicit in the new Constitution and a strong popular demand — and, on the other hand, the need to ensure adequate political and ethnic representation.

The outcome of those consultations was made public on 23 December. The composition of the 27-member Cabinet does indeed meet the requirements of the Afghan constitution, and all ministers have higher education and hold only Afghan citizenship. It also reflects broadly the ethnic composition of the country, with 10 Pashtuns, eight Tajiks, five Hazaras, two Uzbeks, one Turkmen and one Baloch. Three women are in the Cabinet, among them the only female presidential candidate, Mrs. Masuda Jalal.

Of course, the composition of the Cabinet will not escape criticism from one quarter or another. But the consultations that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has held with political parties, representatives of civil society and communities in various regions indicate that the majority of Afghans welcome the composition of the new Cabinet and see it as a sign of the increasingly national character of the Afghan Government. That is in contrast to the mitigated — and sometimes critical — reaction of public opinion after the 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga, which many saw as overly influenced by factional considerations and as a missed opportunity to establish a truly representative central government. This vote of confidence in the new Cabinet will no doubt increase the authority and the effectiveness of the Government as it tackles some very complex, urgent and difficult tasks on the national agenda, including the holding of local and parliamentary elections this year, expanded disarmament and demobilization and counter-narcotics endeavours.

Let me turn to the first of those tasks. The Council may recall that, with its endorsement, the electoral commission decided last year to split the electoral process in two and indicated that the parliamentary elections would be held in the Afghan month of Saur 1383 — between 21 April and 21 May 2005. A variety of considerations were behind that decision. One concerned a number of key legal and administrative prerequisites that were not met on time. Another related to the need to bring about further disarmament and a political environment conducive to free and transparent elections, in particular at the provincial and district levels, where the militarization inherited from decades of civil war was most likely to affect and distort the electoral process. Both we and the electoral commission felt that, given the complete absence of any electoral tradition or practice in Afghanistan, the relatively simpler presidential election would well serve all actors involved in the election as a rehearsal for the much more complex set of elections involved in the parliamentary process. In that respect, all observer organizations — international and domestic — have issued useful recommendations that are being taken into account in the ongoing preparations for the upcoming elections.

The centrepiece of those preparations is the establishment of the Independent Electoral Commission called for by the Constitution. Its appointment, which is a presidential prerogative, is an opportunity to implement some of the lessons learned from the presidential election, in particular the need for closer consultation with the large number of new political parties — approximately 50 — that have been registered since last year and which need to develop more confidence in the operation of the electoral

authority. In the past few weeks, we have been working with the President's Office to elicit the views and recommendations of political parties and community leaders on that matter, and we can expect that the new Commission will be appointed in the very near future.

In addition to the creation of the new Independent Electoral Commission, we expect that the parliamentary elections will see an enhanced role for Afghans throughout the process. That will be the case with the organization of the elections, where, overall, the Afghan personnel performed very well during the presidential election. And it will also be the case with domestic observation and political parties. Indeed, in a few months, local elections will take the electoral competition to many parts of the country to which international observers are unlikely to have easy access. Domestic observers and the action of party monitors will therefore bear much of the responsibility for ensuring that local elections are fair and credible. From that standpoint, the presidential election was a promising start. We therefore expect that the recruitment and the training of those observers and monitors will play a major role in safeguarding the integrity of the upcoming electoral process.

In order to meet the April-May target date, the Government and the electoral authorities have to make a number of decisions: on the participation of refugees and nomads; the demarcation of district boundaries; the population figures for each province; the preparation of voter lists; and the revision of the electoral law. The most urgent of those decisions concerns the assignment of population settlements to districts, a task which, under the electoral law, must be completed 120 days before election day. For elections to take place within the agreed time frame, district boundaries must therefore be finalized within the next couple of weeks at the very latest. The Ministry of Interior, which is in the lead for that process, has indicated that good progress has been made, and it is hoped that decisions are imminent.

One important piece of legislation that remains outstanding concerns the powers of the local councils that are to be elected together with the representatives to the lower house. The creation of elected bodies at the district and provincial levels is an innovation in the Afghan political system brought about by the new Constitution. Their functions relative to existing administrative structures must be defined well ahead of the elections. A mission of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on local governance, which visited Afghanistan last month, has recommended a gradualist approach to the empowerment of those bodies. More specifically, it suggested that for the time being, those councils could be given a local-level advisory role to the executive body. Further consultations must take place on that issue before legislation is passed.

That complex preparatory work is pursued, as I said, with the April-May target in mind, and a final decision on the election date will have to be made by the new Independent Electoral Commission in the next few weeks. Political leaders and representatives of the international community agree that the gap between presidential and parliamentary elections should be kept to a minimum, but they have also noted that this should not be achieved at the expense of a well organized and transparent election with adequate time for technical and political requirements to be properly met.

With regard to the management of electoral operations, we have streamlined international support in order to capitalize on the proven strengths of each international partner. UNDP will continue to oversee trust fund management and donor relations, in addition to contributing to support for electoral observation. The United Nations Office for Project Services, which has demonstrated its flexibility in administrative and logistical matters, will be the executing agency for all budget lines.

That brings me to the very important matter of the funding required for the holding of the 2005 elections. Depending on the date they are held, it is estimated that between $120 million and $130 million will be needed to cover the three elections. If the Government should decide to hold out-of-country elections in Iran and Pakistan, an additional $30 million at least would need to be added to that estimate. UNDP is in the process of closing the books of the voter registration and the presidential election projects. Once that is completed, leftover funds will be allocated to the parliamentary elections. We will make appeals to the international community for the remainder of the funding needed as soon as the date of the elections has been decided, since, as I said, different time frames require different budgets.

I should add that, from the operational standpoint, it is anticipated that the modalities for the 2005 elections will closely follow those of the 2004 elections. The

location and the number of polling sites — 25,000 — was based on registration figures and proposals from communities. There is therefore no reason to alter those basic parameters. Similarly, logistical arrangements for the deployment of personnel and material will, in the main, be replicated with the assistance of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the coalition.

Turning to the issue of security, the deployment of the National Army and professional police will gain additional relevance for the parliamentary elections, for which close to 400 district elections will need to be secured. I am pleased to report that the Afghan National Army, currently at 28 battalions — a force of approximately 17,000 — is expected to increase to 32 battalions by April and to 39 battalions by July. The size of the reformed and trained Afghan National Police is also expected to increase from approximately 30,000 members currently to more than 37,000 by April and more than 45,000 by July.

While the Afghan police and army will play a major role in the 2005 elections, as they did in the 2004 election, international forces will remain indispensable for providing security and for backing up national agencies. ISAF and the coalition have indicated their full support for the next election and have noted that their most urgent requirement is that an electoral time frame be in place as soon as possible in order to enable them to adjust their plans.

Finally, we must have in mind the type of security challenges that the United Nations itself will be facing. While the abduction of three United Nations electoral workers in October was brought to a successful conclusion — and I should take this opportunity to thank those Governments that had a very significant involvement in securing that release — and, while the overall security environment has shown signs of improvement in recent weeks, the kidnapping and killing of a United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) subcontracted staff member on 15 December is a reminder of the possibility that the targeting of international personnel could occur again and perhaps become more routine once winter conditions recede and the movement of anti-Government forces becomes easier.

This issue must be tackled in a comprehensive manner. The United Nations Country Team has addressed this problem through a comprehensive security assessment. Its overall conclusions are that the security situation remains very diverse in different parts of the country; that adequate measures must be taken that will provide United Nations agencies and electoral operations accessibility to risk-prone regions; and that the strict observance of minimum operational security standards, which enabled the United Nations to carry out its mandate in 2004, should enable us to operate in the same manner once again in 2005.

Let me turn now to developments in other areas that will have a bearing on the environment in which the elections will be taking place.

The Council is well aware of the fact that the narcotics industry and the accompanying corruption are now clearly one of the biggest threats to the building of an effective, democratic Afghan State and to the country's long-term peace and stability. Opium cultivation remains one of the largest sources of illegal income and serves to support criminal and factional agendas that aim to undermine the central Government.

One of the most worrisome aspects of the narcotics industry is the extent to which the Afghan economy and, therefore, the population now depend on it. Valued in 2004 at $2.8 billion, the opium economy is now equivalent to about 60 per cent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product. It is estimated that in 2004, 356,000 families were involved in opium-poppy cultivation — an increase of 35 per cent from 2003. Poppy cultivation has also spread to 34 provinces and now accounts for 56 per cent of total cultivated land.

The central Government has shown a commitment to tackling the problem. We welcome the recent establishment of the new Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, and we welcome also the holding in December by President Karzai of a national conference on counter-narcotics, attended by governors, chiefs of provincial police departments, tribal elders from throughout the country, relevant ministries, and representatives of donor countries, United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations. President Karzai spoke resolutely about the need to eliminate the drug problem from Afghanistan, warning that Afghanistan could very well become a pariah State should counter-narcotics efforts fail. Since that event, significant numbers of farmers in the east and the south have been replacing poppy with wheat. That is, of course, a very welcome development, even though the extent to which those

initiatives will make a dent in poppy production can be determined only during the harvesting month, in April.

At the same national conference in December, the Government officially launched the national narcotics eradication programme, which is due to focus on seven key provinces in a staggered fashion until July 2005. The national programme will include the provision of alternative livelihoods for poppy-growing farmers, the extension of drug law enforcement, the implementation of drug-control legislation, the establishment of effective institutions, and the introduction of programmes aimed at prevention and at treatment for addicts. Governor-led programmes will also be implemented in other provinces.

In order to counterbalance the potentially negative impact of eradication initiatives, it is critical that alternative livelihood programmes be strengthened and made known to affected communities. It is also crucial that the Government develop further its ongoing counter-narcotics public information campaign and disseminate its messages through traditional and community-based channels.

I mentioned earlier that disarmament and demobilization had been a key consideration in deciding on the date and modalities of the elections. Indeed, it has been and remains a constant concern of Afghans that elections should take place when a proper political environment has been created through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). That concern applies particularly to local elections, where a web of political interests and armed groups could significantly distort the electoral process.

The Security Council will recall that, in the most recent briefing to the Council on Afghanistan two months ago, we reported that 22,000 ex-combatants had been disarmed and that 75 per cent of the total number of heavy weapons in the country had been cantoned. I am pleased to inform the Council that, since then, significant progress has been made, particularly in the past few weeks, under the combined influence of the momentum of the presidential election and the good work done by the Ministry of Defence and the international community under the lead of the Government of Japan.

To date, 33,000 militiamen have been disarmed, and the heavy weapons cantonment programme is almost complete. More than 63,000 names have been removed from the payroll, which, to a large extent, included ghost units rather than real militia forces. Given the rate of actual disarmament compared to the official strength of militia forces, we can now assume that, of the residual 40,000 names on the original list, only 20,000 to 30,000 really exist and have yet to be disarmed. If the DDR momentum is sustained, and if the remaining obstacles are removed, we can therefore reasonably expect the disarmament and demobilization of the Afghan militia forces to be completed according to the schedule agreed at the Berlin Conference last year — that is, by June 2005 — with reintegration activities for those demobilized continuing until 2006.

Improved access to large stocks of heavy weapons and ammunition in areas where cantonment operations had been previously hampered — particularly in Herat, Mazar and the north-west — has accelerated progress of this important aspect of DDR. Throughout Afghanistan, Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) — the United Nations DDR programme — has cantoned and disabled close to 8,000 heavy weapons thus far. That figure vastly exceeds the surveyed total of operational and repairable heavy weapons in the country, originally estimated at only approximately 4,200. Cantonment of heavy weapons is now complete in the east, south-east, south, north-west and central highlands.

Access has also been gained to large stocks of ammunition in areas previously off-limits to disarmament activities. Those stocks also proved to be much larger and often more dangerous than expected and pose considerable challenges in terms of disposal or storage for the purpose of re-utilization by the Afghan National Army. The Ministry of Defence, with the support of the international community under Canada's lead, has embarked on the complex task of managing the ammunition that has been discovered. An ammunition survey has begun in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat, the two locations considered to have the most substantial stocks.

It is important to note that DDR has been particularly successful in northern Afghanistan. The requirement under the new political party law that units with links to political organizations must comply with DDR before a political organization can be registered has resulted in considerable disarmament in that area. In particular, practically all military divisions under the control of General Dostum have now begun the DDR process. Broad disarmament will, hopefully, contribute

to stabilizing a region that has been particularly prone to inter-factional conflict over the past three years.

Let me take the opportunity to flag the importance of providing the DDR programme with adequate resources. Unless fresh funds to cover the cost of running a complex disarmament programme are provided to ANBP, the programme will suffer delays, and the momentum built since the presidential election could be lost.

Let me add one important point with regard to DDR. Since the inception of the programme in 2003, DDR has focused so far only on militia forces formally affiliated with the Ministry of Defence. While this DDR programme is progressing well, a large number of miscellaneous irregular forces were not included in the programme and continue to exist throughout the country. Some — although not all — of those forces are among the main sources of insecurity and human rights abuses in certain parts of the country, and their activities are frequently linked to drug cultivation and the drug trade. In order to create a secure environment for parliamentary elections, the new Government therefore must, as a matter of priority and with the support of the international community, tackle the problem of irregular militias.

As the Council is well aware, the consolidation of peace can and usually will mean very different things in different countries. In the case of Afghanistan, it has been the international consensus since the Bonn Agreement that the principal answer to the challenges of terrorism, factionalism and the narcotics industry lies in the building of a strong, effective, balanced and representative Government that is able to carry out the will of the overwhelming majority of Afghans to live in peace under the law, protected from violent extremism and from those political and ethnic divisions that have fuelled the conflicts of the past two decades.

Last year's presidential election showed the determination with which the Afghans embrace that vision. The repeated failure of extremists to derail the electoral process, combined with the better performance of security forces, point today to the possibility that the current improvement in the overall security situation will be sustained. Further DDR will create a better environment not only for the upcoming elections, but also for the expansion of civilian administration, reconstruction and the restoration of the rule of law.

Such an advance towards the goal of an effective Afghan State is, in our view, a very real prospect. But that is no reason for complacency on the part of the international community — quite the contrary — because such progress is predicated upon continued high levels of international assistance — military, economic and political — and because the narco-economy now constitutes a distinct challenge to State-building in Afghanistan, and bringing it under control will require additional efforts by the Afghans, but also by the international community.

Let me conclude, therefore, by calling upon the Security Council to continue, throughout 2005, to provide vigorous leadership to the international community in support of the peace process in Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Arnault for the information he has provided us.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.